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ABSTRACT

This document describes the Syracuse University Kellogg Project's efforts to initiate a documentation strategy for the field of adult education and also includes a summary of the project's 1988 symposium on that subject. Following an introduction, the first section explains the university's interest in documentation strategy for adult education. The second and third sections explain the concept of documentation strategy and the project's application of that concept. The fourth section describes the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the symposium, including a mission statement, a list of six questions that need answering, three goals that were agreed on, and several tasks to be done. The questions involved whether the field should be divided geographically, by subjects, by types of participants, or by institutions; how archivists could be made more aware of adult education; how repositories could be encouraged to collect the types of adult education documents deemed important; whether adult educators, professors, and practitioners can be encouraged to make more use of collected materials; and the effect electronic communications will have on the ways materials are collected, stored, and used. The goals were to determine the research requirements of adult educators; identify sources and appraise, develop, and acquire materials in support of adult education research; and define a scheme for creating a strategy for documentation. The tasks included standardizing vocabulary and classification, gathering information, making contacts, developing a plan, and drafting a documentation strategy statement. (CML)

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DOCUMENTING ADULT EDUCATION: TOWARD A COOPERATIVE STRATEGY

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This Technical Report Series is dedicated to disseminating knowledge regarding project initiatives, with the hope that sharing such information will improve the study and practice of adult education.

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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Syracuse University Kellogg Project's efforts to initiate a documentation strategy for the field of adult and continuing education. After providing background on the project and the concept of documentation strategy, the report describes the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the project's September 1988 Documentation Strategy Symposium.

DOCUMENTING ADULT EDUCATION: TOWARD A COOPERATIVE STRATEGY

Terrance Keenan

INTRODUCTION

Adult education scholars face a number of obstacles to finding information relevant to their research: (a) materials relating to their topics may not have been collected, (b) the documents, although relevant to adult education, may be cataloged under other headings, (c) the collections may not be included in available directories or union lists, and (d) they may be unaware of existing directories or databases. Documentation strategies, that is, cooperative strategies to ensure adequate documentation of a field, are designed to address such problems. These strategies have been tried in various physical sciences. However, at our Documentation Strategy Symposium in September 1988, we initiated one of the first attempts to apply this rather recent archival concept to adult education. This was also the first time that archivists, researchers, and producers of archives related to adult education have come together to discuss common concerns.

The symposium started a process that will help us determine what has been documented, where the materials are located, and how they are identified. In cooperation with other libraries and archives, users, administrators, and records creators we will make decisions about what should be documented for future scholars, where such documents would be appropriately housed, how these materials relate to book and image collections, and, finally, how to provide for access and use. We are proposing to create a documentation strategy for adult education, cooperating with other repositories to make the documentation of the field more complete, consistent, and available for scholars.

This report describes the process through which we took the first steps: bringing together concerned parties, discussing the scope of our enterprise, and developing plans for the future. Adult education is at a point in its history at which a summing up of its development as a discipline is appropriate. Documentation strategy affords a means to cooperatively identify and document disparate aspects of the field as a whole.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S INTEREST IN DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY

Syracuse University has an outstanding resource in historical documents related to the adult education field, including a wide variety of manuscript, print, visual, and media materials. The Adult and Continuing Education Research Collection, which has been growing since 1949, forms the largest and perhaps the world's most significant compilation of English-language materials related to the history of adult education. In 1986 the W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded the Kellogg Project in the School of Education to (a) process and research the collection and (b) draw on recently-developed laser disk and computing technologies in making the collection accessible and useful to adult educators worldwide.

The manuscripts alone cover almost 900 linear feet of shelf space and contain more than 60 individual collections of personal papers and organizational records. While some documents date back to the 1920s and earlier, the bulk of the materials falls into the 25-year period between 1945 and 1970. Among the earliest acquisitions were papers from Laubach Literacy International, the Association of University Evening Colleges, and Bernard Reed. Subsequent acquisitions include records from the American Association for Adult Education, the Center for the Study of Liberal Education of Adults, and the Fund for Adult Education.

The materials were gathered largely through the efforts of Alexander N. Charters, former Dean of University College, Syracuse University's continuing education division. Charters was an active member of many of the organizations—and a colleague of most of the individuals—represented in the collection.

The George Arents Research Library, where the materials are housed, has identified the collection's strengths as follows: the history of adult education as a profession, as a practice, and as a field of study; adult literacy; and civic education. In addition, we are interested in developing the areas of distance education, educational gerontology, technology and adult education, women and minorities in adult education, and education in industry.

Syracuse University is interested in documentation strategy for several reasons. Because of the soaring costs of housing, maintaining, and preserving archival materials, Syracuse, like other large institutions, can no longer afford to collect on the scale it did two decades ago. Nor can any single institution gather all the significant material for a specific subject area. Yet, in our information-conscious era, the demand for fuller access to information continues to grow. Proponents of documentation

strategy argue that, to meet this demand, the once-common competitive, proprietary approach to collecting must give way to cooperation and sharing among repositories.

National databases, such as the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) and the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), list only those collections officially designated adult or continuing education. However, adult education actually covers a much broader spectrum, including labor and religious education, the women's and civil rights movements, and military and industrial training. By cooperating with each other, individual repositories can help alleviate another obstacle to comprehensive collecting, that is, inappropriate use of terminology.

While working toward a collection development policy for the Syracuse materials, we saw that communication and cooperation with other repositories would help us fill the gaps in our collection, while making field-wide documentation more comprehensive. Therefore, we decided to explore with other adult education repositories the prospect of creating a documentation strategy.

THE DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY CONCEPT

Larry Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett (1987) defined documentation strategy in the *American Archivist:*

> A documentation strategy is a plan to assure the adequate documentation of ongoing multi-institutional issues, activities, functions or subjects. The strategy is ordinarily designed, promoted, and in part implemented by . . . archival documentation creators, records administrators, archivists, users, other experts, beneficiaries and other interested parties. The documentation strategy is carried out through the mutual efforts of many institutions and individuals influencing the creation and management of records and the retention and archival accessioning of some of them. . . . Strategies may be developed at levels ranging from worldwide and nationwide to statewide and community wide.

It is a concept that allows societies, institutions, or disciplines to document their history. These strategies depend on cooperative decisions about what is valuable and what is not. They tend to involve large institutions at which discipline-wide records are usually housed. Such a strategy must be an ongoing, flexible plan that works local policies into broader goals for tracking and recording the history of a field.

Documentation strategy is a controversial topic in the archival world. In one form or another, it has occupied many of the sessions at recent annual conferences of the Society of American Archivists. In the past several years related essays have appeared in professional journals with regularity. The idea is a basic one of cooperation, but thorny questions of control, responsibility, and ownership arise in many quarters.

Much of the effective work in documentation strategy has been done in the physical sciences where the scope of a subject can be more easily defined. For example, in the late 1950s, physicists at the American Institute of Physics (AIP) concluded that "unless immediate and drastic action was taken, the documentation needed to understand modern physics would be lost" (Hackman & Warnow-Blewett, 1987). Having defined their scope as the work of key individuals between 1890 and 1970, including Bohr, Einstein, and Fermi, these scientists contacted historians of science, general historians, and eventually the public at large. They arranged to preserve—and to house at appropriate repositories—documentary source materials, such as printed and unpublished written records, photographs, and experimental apparatus. This was one of the first documentation strategies, though it was not called such at the time.

APPLYING THE CONCEPT

Like the physicists, we at the Syracuse University Kellogg Project want to ensure adequate documentation of our field. However, it is more difficult to define adult education, which is broad and diverse both as an academic discipline and as a field of practice. Academic adult education draws on many other disciplines including sociology, psychology, philosophy, and history; adult education practice manifests itself in literacy instruction, adult basic education, labor education, correctional education, community education, university extension, VISTA and the Peace Corps, continuing professional education, military education, nonformal education, industrial education, vocational education, self-directed learning, and many others. How can the task of documenting all these areas be made manageable? How can adult educators be provided with the tools they need to understand their professional heritage?

In early 1988 we formed a committee within the Kellogg Project to study documentation strategy and how we might apply this concept to adult education. We read the literature and corresponded with some of the leading proponents, and one of us attended a seminar on documentation strategy, which was offered by the Society of

American Archivists. The committee decided to hold a symposium (here defined as a meeting for exchanging ideas) in September 1988 to determine what a documentation strategy for adult education should look like and to what extent such a strategy can be implemented in this field.

We extended invitations to individuals from three professional groups:

1. *Researchers* (sometimes called users) who use historical documents in their study of adult education;

2. *Producers* or creators of documents (representatives of organizations, such as National University Continuing Education Association, NUCEA, that generate documents); and

3. *Archivists* and librarians, who collect, house, manage, and preserve historical documents.

Seventeen scholars, archivists, and key people from adult education organizations accepted our invitation. Represented were Ohio University, the University of Wisconsin, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Dalhousie University, the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA), the Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture, the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), the University of Georgia, Arizona State University, Northern Illinois University, the University of British Columbia, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, the University of Nebraska, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), and Syracuse University.

The agenda allowed time to (a) discuss the concept of documentation strategy and how it might apply to adult education; (b) identify the concerns of archivists, researchers, and producers regarding the creation of a documentation strategy; (c) agree on what aspects of adult education to include in our initial scope; (d) pool our knowledge of existing repositories, collections, and access tools; and (e) formulate a plan of action.

We asked Philip Doughty, now Dean of Syracuse University's School of Education, to be our facilitator. He met with our committee several times to help decide on time frames, location, activities, and logistics. In preparing the agenda and other materials we tried to anticipate problems. For example, we knew it would be difficult for the

group to agree on the scope of adult education; and we knew there would be vocabulary problems as archivists, adult education researchers, and representatives of adult education organizations (producers) strove to understand each other's professional jargon.

THE SYMPOSIUM

The 23 participants, including five Kellogg Project staff members and our facilitator, gathered at a secluded conference center on a lake outside of Syracuse.

Much of the first session was devoted to the attempt to define adult education, e.g.:

- Adult education is all forms of education engaged in by adults.
- Adult education is how some people have helped others learn or how some people have learned on their own.
- Adult education is purposeful educational activities engaged in by persons over 17 years of age, excluding activities engaged in by those still in full-time study.

We were unable to reach a consensus, and these definitions were too broad as a basis for deciding what areas to include in a documentation strategy. However, the need for a cooperative strategy became increasingly clear as representatives of the three groups discussed their problems.

For example, archivists need to know what materials should be collected and how to reach potential users. Researchers, lacking a comprehensive nationwide finding aid, report finding materials only by serendipity and on their own. They need to know where the materials are and how they are organized. Those who create records need to know where they would be most appropriately housed and which records warrant permanent preservation. One archivist characterized the relationships among the three groups as follows:

> There is a triangle with the creator of records at the top and the user and keeper at each of the other points. Any one must interact with the other two, yet the communication links are weak. Between users and creators you have a side that traditionally has difficulty defining itself. Therefore, it is even harder for an archivist

to employ clear terminology. Adult educators have more loyalty to their craft or profession than to their employing institutions. Archivists function institutionally. The working base for each is fundamentally different and one cannot understand what the others are doing.

In spite of, and perhaps because of, the difficulty we experienced in arriving at a common understanding, we developed more questions than we did answers, such as the following:

- Should we divide the field geographically, by subjects, by types of participants, or by institutions?
- How can we make archivists more aware of adult education?
- How can we encourage repositories to collect the types of adult education documents deemed important?
- Are there ways to enlist the help of adult educators in identifying materials of permanent value?
- How can we encourage adult education students, professors, and practitioners to make more use of collected materials?
- What effect will electronic communications have on the ways materials are collected, stored, and used?

We did agree on a mission statement, paraphrased below:

We believe a documentation strategy is needed as a means to improve research in adult education and related fields. Such a strategy would engage records creators, archivists, and researchers across North America in a cooperative effort to create, collect, organize, and promote use of adult education manuscripts and archives.

We identified three goals and formed three small groups, and each group identified objectives for one of the goals, as follows:

Goal 1. Determine the research requirements of adult educators.

Identify the domain of adult education. How is the education of adults used and what is the role and function of adult education in American culture?

Identify interests in and needs for historical research in adult education in relation to what has already been done in historical research;

Identify present and potential users of collections by initiating an adult education history network through organizations like the Commission of Professors of Adult Education.

Goal 2. Identify sources and appraise, develop, and acquire materials in support of adult education research.

Identify and disseminate information about access tools for adult education research, e.g., Online Catalog of Library Collections (OCLC), Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC), etc.;

Develop a plan to identify repositories, organizations, institutions, and individuals holding primary source materials and research collections;

Develop research collections in appropriate adult education research interest areas;

Appraise and acquire records and research collections of permanent value for adult education.

Goal 3. Define a scheme for creating a strategy.

Assemble a core group of six to eight people representing the three professional groups: archivists, researchers, and producers. This core group must develop an overall plan with specific tasks, with support from the symposium attendees and with advice from someone experienced in implementing a documentation strategy;

Within 18 months of establishing the core group, prepare a documentation strategy statement and a communication mechanism, such as FAX, E-mail, or correspondence.

It was clear we needed a base of operations for developing a documentation strategy, one with the means to implement and follow through on these goals; and someone had to direct the implementation. The consensus was that the Syracuse University Kellogg Project should take the lead in developing plans for the strategy.

The group made a list of tasks to be done. Although some tasks fell outside the scope of a documentation strategy, they fit within the scope of an organization like the Kellogg Project, which functions in many ways as a discipline history center.

Standardize vocabulary and classification.

A glossary should be created, identifying key words in journals from recent years, noting adult education documentation under other topics with pointers to related fields identifiably adult education.

Gather information.

We can use surveys to identify adult education documents classified under other headings. However, the benefits of responding to those surveys must be obvious to potential participants. Before sending a survey, it will be important to talk with people in each organization to learn how their organization functions, making sure their comments are reflected in the survey. Surveys should be sent to the major associations, asking them where they keep their records; to adult education departments and faculty centers to find out about regional resources; and to professional associations and their educational subgroups.

Make strategic contacts.

We also need to develop links with the National Archives, the Department of Education, and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (a funding agency), perhaps involving them in our process, to make use of their vast databases and other resources.

Develop a plan.

A plan should include the following elements: getting the word out about the symposium and other efforts through this report and other vehicles; developing timelines with both the Kellogg Project and the Syracuse University Library; updating previous literature searches and preparing surveys for archivists, researchers, and producers after researching the needs and functions of each; collating and reviewing survey results; developing a core group of six to eight people, perhaps from among the symposium participants; and bringing in a documentation strategy specialist as a consultant to help us draft a strategy statement.

Draft a Documentation Strategy Statement.

Such a statement would include the functional scope of the strategy, the geographical scope, a list of participants, an account of our information pool (surveys, databases, studies, etc.), a summary of our findings, our recommended actions or practices (the actors, the role of the group, timelines, etc.), suggested future actions, a list of related subject areas not covered by the strategy but still coordinated through the communication mechanism, and target dates for revisions and review.

During the final session, we gathered information from the group about existing collections, directories and union lists, other cooperative collection efforts, sources of important documents, and other institutions and individuals who should be informed of our activities. Thus, we acquired a base of information upon which to build.

The participants did not feel, however, that we had reached closure. Rather, they felt they had more to offer to the ongoing process. For example, they could help create links among archival groups, identify guides to institutions, help identify and enlist the cooperation of key people and repositories, and provide consultation on research needs.

ASSESSING THE SYMPOSIUM

As a result of the symposium we understand better the issues involved in creating a documentation strategy for adult education. Through our discussions the key players—archivists, researchers, and document producers—came to appreciate each other's perspective. These players gave us a charge: to assume responsibility for the

development of a documentation strategy. Although we could not definitively set the scope of adult education, we succeeded in forming a workable plan for the future to document and protect evidence of the past.

Note. Readers are invited to send suggestions and comments to Terry Keenan, Adult Education Manuscripts Librarian, Syracuse University Kellogg Project, 113 Euclid Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244-4160.

REFERENCES

Hackman, L. J. & Warnow-Blewett, J. (1987, Winter). The documentation strategy process: A model and a case study. *American Archivist, 50,* 12-47.